

SWAIN COUNTY, NC



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Needs Addressed:

The Swain County Farmers Market struggled for several years, with leadership and location changing almost annually. Vendor participation and customer support were weak, while marketing efforts were almost non-existent.

Project/Process:

In 2010, with the support of CEFS, seed money and a strong collaboration between Swain County Cooperative Extension Agents, as well as community partners, the Swain County Farmers Market became a success. The day of the week was changed from Saturday to Friday. This allowed for vendors from a neighboring county's market another opportunity to sell their products without competition between markets. Next the location was changed to the parking lot of a doctor's office that was closed on Fridays. The major road in front of the parking lot allowed for high traffic and visibility. The seed money was used to leverage matching funds from Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, the Tourism Development Authority and Farm Bureau for marketing and insurance. Two billboards were purchased in highly visible locations along the same major road within several miles of the market. A Facebook page was created. Committed farmers took leadership in pursuing the location and additional funds. The farmers and Extension Agents together formed a market management team that developed bylaws and application for vendors. Vendor participation doubled from previous years and customer support increased.



Finally, the Farmer's Market partnered with the Bryson City Food Pantry to develop a voucher program for food pantry clients. Each family member received a \$5 voucher for fruits, vegetables, eggs and trout. By the end of the season, the redemption rate for the voucher program was approximately 67%, bringing in almost an additional \$2,000 to the market.

Lessons Learned:

- Set guidelines and have a market manager to reduce conflicts
- Location, date and time are key
- Don't compete with other markets
- If you want something, "Just Ask"

Partnerships:

[Swain Chamber of Commerce](#), [Swain Farm Bureau](#), [Sleepy Hollow Farm](#), [Balltown Bee Farm](#), Bryson City Food Pantry, [Smoky Mountain Times](#), Tourism Development Authority

Next Steps:

- Form a Board of Directors
- Planning for 2011
- Address traffic safety issues
- Increase marketing
- Adjust vendor guidelines
- Discuss charging a fee